

VZCZCXRO2907  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHGB #1947/01 1771415  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 251415Z JUN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7982  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001947

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/25/2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV IZ

SUBJECT: PRODDING THE IRAQIS TOWARDS PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

This cable contains an action request for Ankara, see paragraphs 7 and 8.

Summary

¶1. (C) The Ambassador, UNAMI SRSG Staffan de Mistura, and UK Ambassador Christopher Prentice agreed at a June 24 meeting on a way forward to prod the Iraqis into reaching consensus on how to handle elections in Kirkuk so that the draft provincial election law can pass and provincial elections be held before the end of the year. According to UNAMI, the GOI is technically capable of holding the elections by December. The three also agreed that the Turks need to hear a strong message that they should not be providing an excuse for delaying the overall provincial elections (see action request in paragraph 8).

Drop-Dead Date for Provincial Elections Fast Approaching

¶2. (C) At a June 24 meeting, UNAMI Special Representative of the Secretary General Staffan de Mistura laid out his concern that, because the Iraqis have still not reached agreement on a draft provincial election law, the date is fast approaching when UNAMI will be forced to announce that provincial elections cannot take place this year. All three agreed that elections are the single most important political event of the year, and must happen. They are necessary to redress the imbalance of the Sunni boycott in 2005, maintain momentum on political progress, and give a forum for alternate political voices to be heard.

¶3. (SBU) Technically speaking, elections can be held by the end of the year. UNAMI's analysis is that the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) is ready to begin voter registration on July 15. Only political intervention would prevent that at this point. Voter registration takes 30 days, followed by a validation period; candidate registration would take place in August; 120 days are then needed to print the ballot; so elections could take place in December, assuming a law is in place by the end of July.

How Do You Solve a Problem Like Kirkuk?

¶4. (C) De Mistura, Prentice, and the Ambassador all agreed that Kirkuk is now the showstopper -- the Iraqi political blocs are unable to agree on how to handle elections in Kirkuk, and are allowing that to block passage of the entire election law. The other remaining issues, such as ensuring that 25% of seats go to women, can be resolved. Prentice stressed that Kirkuk must be cut out of the law and dealt with separately, so that the election law as a whole can proceed. The question, de Mistura said, is how can Kirkuk be handled separately, when to do so will please the Kurds but anger the Arabs? What rationale can be presented to justify delaying elections in Kirkuk?

¶5. (C) Sandra Mitchell, chief UNAMI election advisor, said that one possibility is to announce that the Kirkuk voter registry contains too many anomalies and requires special analysis and vetting. She said that UNAMI is currently doing a statistical analysis of the Kirkuk voter registry, and preliminary results should be ready in a few days. If too many anomalies are found, UNAMI could persuade IHEC to call for a special process for Kirkuk.

¶6. (C) De Mistura said he firmly believed that the Iraqis must be given an absolute deadline for passing the election law, and that they need a very strong wake-up call that elections have to take place. The Ambassador suggested that the U.S., UK, and UN deliver a coordinated and uncompromising message to the Iraqi political leaders that they must resolve their differences on this and move on the election law. The three agreed on the following joint approach: immediately deliver a stern message to the political leaders that these elections are very important to them, their government, and their people, and the U.S., UK, and UN will not/not understand if they can't come to agreement and pass the law by the end of July. However, the international community will not -- at that point -- take the Iraqis by the hand and tell them how to come to agreement on Kirkuk. Then give the Iraqis until mid-July to reach agreement. If they can't get there by then, the international community will offer them specific options for dealing with Kirkuk.

Weigh In With The Turks

---

¶7. (C) There was also discussion of the very unhelpful

BAGHDAD 00001947 002 OF 002

Turkish interference in the election law process. The Turkish proposal, introduced by the Turkmen bloc in the Council of Representatives (CoR), to divide the Kirkuk provincial council seats by giving 32% each to the Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen, with the remaining 4% going to minorities, was what initially brought Kirkuk into play in the election law debate at the end of May, and is still being used to delay resolution of the issue. Prentice said the UK has already told the Turks that their 32% proposal should not be used as an excuse to delay the elections; de Mistura agreed that the Turks need to keep hearing a strong message that they should not be providing a pretext that will stop the entire election process.

Action Request

---

¶8. (C) Post requests that the Department instruct Embassy Ankara to demarche the Turkish government at the highest level that Iraqi provincial elections must take place by the end of this year, and that the Turks should use their influence with the Turkmen and others to achieve that goal.  
CROCKER